

**REPRESENTATIONS OF THE OTHER  
IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIA**

**Volume 1**

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## Abstract

*Representations of the Other in Contemporary Australia* is a thesis consisting of a novel, *Brother Nation*, and an exegesis in a separate volume.

*Brother Nation* is set in Australia at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a time of great political and social change. The novel explores ambiguities in issues of race, crime and moral justice through the eyes of an adolescent who comes of age amidst a chain of disturbing events.

Omar Assaf is a sensitive sixteen-year-old with a problem—he needs to lose his virginity. However, like most boys his age, he is anxious and naive about matters of sex and love.

When a young female friend, Belle, rejects his romantic overtures, Omar is crushed. He rapidly falls under the corrupting influence of his older brother, Sam, and Sam's motley band of miscreant friends. Fuelled by drugs, alcohol and pornography, the boys roam the migrant suburbs of southwest Sydney, alleviating their boredom and frustration by flirting with crime, cruising in cars and pursuing girls.

However, Omar soon learns that being involved with Sam and the boys has dangerous consequences. In compensating for his sense of emasculation, Omar finds himself taking part in a series of attacks, including a betrayal of Belle. Though ambivalent about and at times sickened by his complicity, Omar realises much too late that he and his brother have entered a theatre where their fate will be determined by broader, more powerful forces than he could ever have imagined.

The exegesis charts the creation of *Brother Nation* via the author's movement from a mode of autopoiesis to allopoiesis, through the practice of narrative research. That is, the essay is structured to illustrate how the process of researching the novel resulted in the production of knowledge external to the creative work itself. In doing this I discuss the genesis of the idea to write the novel, the basis and modes of my narrative research, the style of the finished work in relation to the genre of the 'faction' or 'non-fiction novel', and the internal and external conflicts that arose in

relation to the representation of demonised Arabic Other characters in the story. I also contextualise the work in relation to other relevant fiction and non-fiction texts that address similar subject matter, and make a case for holding a non-essentialised notion of cultural identity regarding my own speaking position.

In particular, this exegesis investigates problematic questions in relation to representations of contemporary characters with an immigrant Other background; and, via the framework of Bakhtinian theories of dialogism and heteroglossia, considers the extent to which seemingly incompatible moral viewpoints can be coherently instantiated in fiction through a multiplicity of characters' voices.

## **Declaration**

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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